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REPORT

OF A

COMMITTEE OF THE OVERSEERS

OF

HARVARD UNIVERSITY,

CONCERNING THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION

TO THE

UNIVERSITY.

SALEM:
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REPORT.

The Committee to whom was referred the following resolution, viz: "That this Board do not advise an increase in the requirements for admission to Harvard College," have considered that subject, and respectfully submit the following REPORT.

It was deemed important by the Committee to ascertain the requisitions for admission to the other principal Colleges in New England, as well as at Harvard. They accordingly applied to the Presidents or other instructors of those institutions, who all promptly replied to the inquiries made of them, and kindly furnished the requisite information. Two tabular statements are annexed to this report; one, of the text books in which candidates for admission to Harvard University have been examined, from the year 1833 to the present time, and the other showing the present requirements for admission to Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Williams, Brown, Amherst, and Bowdoin Colleges. As might be expected among institutions formed essentially after the same model, there is a considerable degree of similarity in the preparatory course. The requisitions at Harvard are, however, greater than at any other College, particularly in mathematics. Our University has taken the lead in enlarging the course of preparatory studies, as might be expected of her from her age, her numerous endowments, her extended means of instruction, and the high condition of the preparatory schools in the vicinity, and from which a large proportion of her students come. Other Colleges have with

laudable pride followed her example, and have added to their requirements from time to time, until the standard for admission to the New England Colleges has been generally raised. The Committee are also informed, that they have imitated the well known example of Harvard, in making their examinations for admission more strict and thorough than they formerly were. They have great pleasure in stating their belief, that the remark of President Hopkins, respecting Williams College, is applicable to the Collegiate Institutions of New England, generally. "It is not to be inferred from the circumstance that the requirements for admission have not been recently increased, that the standard of College education has not been raised. The examinations for entrance have been made more thorough, and the course of College studies has been changed, condensed, and improved, and as I think, the habits of study are more thorough."

The question whether it is expedient to increase the requisitions for admission to Harvard College, is one of great importance, and might lead to a very extensive enquiry. The topic is intimately connected with the interests of the Institution and with the public interests; but the Committee have come to an opinion which renders it unnecessary to consider the subject at any great length. However important an increase might be to the interests of learning, and the promotion of a high and thorough intellectual education, it is evident that a change, to be salutary, must be gradual, among other reasons, on account of the state of our Schools and Academies. A learned Professor of one of our most respectable Colleges,* writes—"We found it very difficult to bring our Academies up to the present terms, so as to have our pupils as well fitted as they ought to be; and we are making efforts to render Academic instruction more thorough." There can be no doubt that raising the standard for admission to College, would have a beneficial influence on the preparatory Schools. Doctor Wayland, in his excellent treatise, "Thoughts on the present Collegiate system in the United States," remarks, (p. 105,) "It is certainly practicable to enlarge our requirements for admission. We may demand a much more thorough and scholar-like acquaintance with Latin, Greek, Arithmetic, the elements of Mathe-

* Bowdoin.

matics, Geography, History, ancient and modern, and the English language. The benefits of such a change would be manifold. It would materially improve the condition of all our Academies. It would render the office of Teacher of far greater consequence, as it would require more thorough scholarship, and command a higher remuneration. In England, the Teachers of the preparatory Schools, hold a rank among the ablest and most distinguished of her scholars. The masters of Westminster and Eton, of Rugby and Harrow, stand side by side with Bishops and heads of Colleges. There is no man in Great Britain at this moment, enjoying a more enviable or a better deserved reputation than Dr. Arnold, the beloved and revered master of Rugby.* Why should it not be so here? Why should our Academies be so frequently committed to young men preparing for the professions, who only teach for the sake of the emolument of two or three years labor, and then abandon the occupation forever? Just in proportion as we require more, will more be done by Academies, and the more that is done there, the higher will be the rank, and the more pleasant the situation of the Principal." These and other remarks of the learned and experienced author, on this subject, are entitled to the serious consideration of all, to whom the care of our highest Seminaries of learning is committed. The committee take the liberty of quoting another passage from the same work. "The advantages to scholarship from this alteration are equally obvious. With more thorough knowledge and a more mature understanding, the student would more fully appreciate the value of time, and more accurately estimate the bearing of his present diligence upon his ultimate success. He would be the better able to put forth his already developing powers of original investigation. He would feel in some degree, his ability to enquire for truth for himself, and not merely to treasure up the knowledge which is contained in text books. His mental occupations would thus assimilate more nearly to those in which he is to be engaged in professional life; and I cannot but believe that the result would be a more manly, intellectual stature, and a fuller and freer mental development."

But however desirable it may be to raise the standard of Collegiate education, no great change, nothing like a revolution

* Whose recent decease is universally lamented, as a great loss to the cause of public education.

can be suddenly effected, without great injury. Harvard College is coeval with Massachusetts — it has become interwoven with the usages of our society. The requirements for admission must be influenced by the state of public sentiment; and at the same time it is an important duty of her Instructors and Visitors, to correct and elevate public opinion on this subject, as far as may be in their power, and to impress upon the community a sense of the necessity of gradually raising the standard of liberal education. Harvard is now furnished with the means of obtaining a thorough and extensive University education — but it is manifest that these cannot be available, as they ought to be, if a portion of the few years of residence at the University must be devoted to elementary studies, which might as well be pursued at the preparatory Schools. Science has been greatly advanced and is advancing. New studies have from time to time been introduced — we may almost say, been *crowded* into the Collegiate course, until a large portion of time is devoted to subjects, not formerly required. This is unavoidable, if the Institution is to keep pace with the progress of science and literature. There will be danger, therefore, that the attainments of the students, in all, will necessarily be superficial, unless higher requirements for admission are established. We boast much that we live in an age of improvement, and still more that we live in a country which is rapidly advancing in wealth, population, and other resources which make a nation great and powerful. We flatter ourselves also, especially in Massachusetts, that our common schools have been greatly improved. New spirit has been infused into them. Surely our highest seminaries should not remain stationary. If they do not lead the way, they should partake of this spirit of progress, in education.

The principal objection to an increase of requirements for admission is the additional expense it would cause, and the greater time which must be passed in preparation. But is it wise to keep down the standard of University education on account of this inconvenience? Besides, it is believed that the evil would be less in reality than in apprehension, and that in a great degree it would be temporary only. New facilities are constantly furnished for preparatory education, by improved text books and editions of classical works, so that it has been

found that students are admitted at as early an age as they were when the preparatory course was much more limited than it now is. It is, indeed, a matter of complaint and of deep regret, that a large portion of the students are entered at too early an age to master the studies required at College, and to derive the full benefit of a University education — too early, it is to be feared, rightly to estimate the true value of time, or to regulate their own studies, judiciously. Our highest standard of College education is so low, that as has been remarked, "an intelligent and industrious youth of *sixteen*, may easily reach the first University honors of the country," and it must be added, "with attainments which would barely qualify him to enter a European University."*

The learned and eminent men who preside over the other principal Colleges in New England, and whose experience entitles their opinion to the highest respect, all concur in the opinion that the value of Collegiate education is much lessened by the limited course of preparatory instruction. This is the result of their observation and experience. President Day, of Yale College, remarks, "the guardians and instructors of this College are desirous of making further additions to the terms of admission, as soon and as fast as the public voice is prepared to accede to the change. The value of an education here, is manifestly impaired, by the imperfect attainments required for admission. Our whole Collegiate course is embarrassed, by crowding into it such branches as ought to be required for admittance into the freshman class. But a large portion of the parents, who are desirous of giving the name, at least, of a liberal education to their children, are already impatient of the amount of time and expense, which the courses of study in our Colleges and preparatory Schools require."

Doctor Wayland, in his communication, says, "We have long and sorely felt the evils of this imperfect preparation. It renders high and scholar-like attainments within the period allotted to a Collegiate course, absolutely impossible. I have had frequent occasion to reflect on the topics suggested in the latter part of your letter — my view of the subject is briefly this: — I think that the inquiries which you propose, proceed upon an erroneous view of the duties of the guardians of a

* North American,—Jan. 1845—p. 45.

University. I suppose their duty to be, to provide a course of instruction that shall correspond with the present state of knowledge in the civilized world. This should be the simple object at which they should aim. Their ability to accomplish it must, of course, be limited by their means. To enable them to do it, I suppose to be the object of *endowments.* It is their business to prepare a course of instruction, neither for the rich nor the poor, but a course of instruction adapted to *the progress of science*, and *the condition of the age.* But it will be asked, what is to be done for young men of genius, who are indigent? The answer to this question I think comes under the duties of benevolence, and is entirely distinct from the other. If an indigent man of talents desire an education, let him be aided by private or public munificence. Let us first make our course of education such as the wants of civilization require, and then make provision by which indigent talent may avail itself of its advantages. It seems to me a fatal error, to limit the highest course of education in a country, by the pecuniary ability of the indigent. All the means of education should be equally open to all. A poor man, if he have talent, should be enabled to cultivate it — but a poor man would be very unreasonable who should demand that no better education should be given, than came within his means. Let the duty of providing for the community the opportunity of the highest intellectual culture be separated from the duty of assisting deserving persons to avail themselves of this opportunity, and I think the difficulties which seem to surround this question will in a great degree vanish."

President Humphrey writes, "It has been our wish to raise the standard, but it being as high as in most of the New England Colleges, for obvious reasons we have not been able to do it. My own decided opinion is, that a more thorough preparation ought to be *required.* It does not become a young and aspiring country like ours, to suffer its literary standard to remain stationary. There should be a gradual advance in our higher Seminaries, as well as in our common Schools. It would be a great advantage if another year or half year of study could be added, before the student enters. Poverty and competition are the obstacles which lie in the way of such a requisition. It is not so with your University and perhaps

one or two other public Institutions in New England; but it is the case with most of them. They must have term bills to pay the salaries of the instructors — to get term bills they must have students, and if one should require much more Greek and Latin than the rest, other doors which stand wider open, would get the scholars.

"It has long seemed to me exceedingly desirable, that by convention or otherwise, the Colleges should have an understanding, if possible *an agreement*, on this and some other points of vital importance to the advancement of literature and sound learning in this country. It would seem as if New England might, though I am afraid there are difficulties which would be found almost insurmountable."

President Lord, of Dartmouth College, is of the same opinion. They have raised the requirements for admission within a few years; and he says, "In these requirements, the College is exact."—"We have intended to advance as fast as possible, but without forcing and without experimenting too far and too rapidly for society as it is constituted within our range."

These opinions, coming as they do from the honored and distinguished men who have long been at the head of some of our highest and best established literary institutions, are full of instruction on this subject, and are entitled to great consideration.

Upon the consideration which they have been able to give this important subject, the Committee cannot therefore recommend the adoption of the resolution referred to them, because an inference might be made from it, unfavorable to any future increase of requirements for admission to the College, and that it is the opinion of this Board, that Harvard should remain stationary in that respect. It might operate as a restraint upon the Faculty and the Corporation, should they hereafter wish to raise the standard for admission. They have all come to the opinion, that no action on the subject, on the part of this Board, is necessary or expedient. They have ascertained from the President of the University, that no change or increase of studies for admission is at present contemplated by the Faculty or the Corporation, who have the immediate care of this subject, and oversight of the institution. From the constitution of this Board, the number of its members, and the circumstance that

a large majority are annually elected, it is not so well calculated as the Boards more closely connected with the University, for the wise direction of this subject. It must be left principally to the care of those officers and instructors who are resident at the College, and whose duty it is to watch over its interests from day to day with anxious and unceasing vigilance, and who have the best means of knowledge, as to its wants, and what will increase its prosperity and usefulness. In the opinion of the Committee, this subject has hitherto received their faithful and judicious attention. They have wisely enlarged the preparatory course of studies from time to time, as the condition of the preparatory schools, the state of public opinion, and the requirements of other Colleges have rendered expedient, until in the opinion of all the Committee, they have been raised to a point as high as is at present advisable. They do not therefore recommend an increase of the requirements for admission; but they trust that the subject, which is of vital importance to the interests of sound learning, and a high moral and intellectual cultivation in our Commonwealth and in the country, will at all times receive that careful consideration to which it is entitled. It must be the anxious desire of this Board and of all connected with our ancient University, and of the people of the Commonwealth, that this great Institution, the object of the pride and the affection of our Fathers, through all preceding generations, with its noble library, it extensive apparatus and its numerous endowments, should fully meet the views and anticipations of its liberal founders and benefactors, and that Harvard should take the lead in introducing and establishing whatever improvements will promote the cause of sound learning, and of a high, thorough and truly liberal education.

Respectfully submitted by

L. SALTONSTALL,

For the Committee.

February 27th, 1845.

REQUIREMENTS AT HARVARD COLLEGE.

Candidates for admission to Harvard College, from 1833 to 1844, have been examined in the following text books, viz:

In 1833. *Latin.*—Virgil; Cicero's Select Orations; Sallust; Latin Grammar (Gould's Adams); Writing Latin; Prosody.

Greek.—Jacobs' Greek Reader; the Four Gospels; Gloucester Grammar; (Bullman's and Fisk's also received); Writing Greek; Prosody.

Mathematics.—Lacroix's Arithmetic; Euler's Algebra; and in Worcester's Elements of Geography, Ancient and Modern.

In 1834 and 1835. The same.

In 1836. Cæsar substituted for Sallust.

In 1837. The same.

In 1838. Latin Grammar; Gould's Adams or Andrews' and Stoddard's.

In 1839. Greek Grammar, Sophocles' or Buttman's, Fisk or Gloucester.

In 1840. Felton's or Jacobs' Greek Reader introduced.

In 1841. Writing Greek, with accents. In Mathematics—Davies' or Lacroix's Arithmetic; Euler's Algebra, or Davies' First Lessons in Algebra.

In 1842. Andrews' and Stoddard's Latin Grammar required. Also, Felton's Greek Reader and Sophocles' Greek Grammar. The Four Gospels discontinued. In Mathematics—Euler's Algebra, or Davies', to Extract of the Square Root; and Introduction to Geometry, to VII. of Proportions.

HARVARD AND OTHER COLLEGES.

Candidates for admission to the Colleges mentioned below, were examined in 1844, in the following text books and studies, viz:

Harvard College.

Latin.—Virgil; Cæsar; Cicero's Select Orations; Andrews' and Stoddard's Latin Grammar; Writing Latin; Prosody.

Greek.—Sophocles' Greek Grammar; Felton's Greek Reader; Writing Greek, with the accents; Prosody.

Mathematics.—Davies' and Lacroix's Arithmetic; Euler's

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Algebra, or Davies' First Lessons to Extraction of the Square Root; Introduction to Geometry, to VII. of Proportions; Worcester's Geography, Ancient and Modern.

YALE COLLEGE.

Latin.—Virgil; Sallust; Cicero's select Orations; Andrews' Stoddard's Grammar; Andrews' Latin Exercises; Prosody.

Greek.—Greek Reader, (Jacobs', Colton's or Felton's.) The first three books of Xenophon's Anabasis; Goodridge's or Sophocles' Greek Grammar. Also, in Arithmetic, English Grammar and Geography.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE.

Latin.—Virgil; Sallust; Cicero's Select Orations; Prosody.

Greek.—The Four Gospels; Jacobs' Greek Reader, or equivalent; Prosody.

Arithmetic, and Bourdon's Algebra through Equations of the first degree. Grammar—English, Latin and Greek.

WILLIAMS COLLEGE.

Latin.—Virgil; Cicero's Select Orations; Sallust or Cæsar.

Greek.—Greek Testament and Dalzel's Coll. Gr. Minora, *or* the Gospels and Jacobs' Greek Reader.

Grammar, English, Latin and Greek; Arithmetic; Algebra through single Equations; Geography.

BROWN UNIVERSITY.

Latin.—Virgil; Cicero's Select Orations; Cæsar; Andrews' and Stoddard's Latin Grammar; Writing Latin.

Greek.—Jacobs', Felton's or Colton's Greek Reader; Kuhner's Greek Grammar; Writing Greek.

Arithmetic; Algebra to Quad. Equations; Geography, Ancient and Modern, and English Grammar.

AMHERST COLLEGE.

Latin.—Virgil; Cicero's Select Orations; Sallust or Cæsar; Andrew's or Stoddard's Latin Grammar; Writing Latin.

Greek.—Kuhner's or Sophocles' Grammar; the Four Gospels; Jacobs' Greek Reader, or an equivalent.

Arithmetic; Murray's or Webster's English Grammar.

BOWDOIN COLLEGE.

Latin.—Virgil; Cicero's Select Orations; Sallust; Writing Latin.

Greek.—The Gospels; Jacobs' or Felton's Greek Reader.

Arithmetic; Six Sections in Smyth's Algebra; Geography, (Morse, Worcester or Woodbridge.)

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